

AMERICAN FARMERS: THE SOLUTION TO THE FUEL CRISIS?

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America is experiencing a serious fuel crisis. We are extremely dependent on unstable foreign governments and foreign oil. The surprise is that the shortage is no surprise. In 1956, Dr. M. King Hubbert, a geophysicist for Shell Oil, predicted that the U.S. would experience its maximum production of crude oil around 1970. He was right on target. As predicted, U.S. oil production peaked at 11.3 million barrels per day late in 1970. Every year since, we have produced less oil! Ah, but the problem gets worse, much worse. We continue to consume huge quantities of oil. More than any other nation and our consumption is increasing. There is a huge gap between what we produce and what we consume. We now import more than 60 percent of our oil, and it's getting worse all the time. At our current rate, we could easily end up at 80 percent. America's economy is heavily dependent on the price of fuel and we can no longer control that price.

Our problem has been well studied and well known for a long time, yet precious little has been done. Clearly, expecting a solution from our elected officials is to put our faith in the wrong place. At the very grass roots level, we need to embrace alternative energy such as wind, solar, water, and biofuels. We need fuel efficient homes, factories, and vehicles. Eighty mile per gallon diesel vehicles already exist in Europe. Forty percent of all vehicles in Europe run on diesel. The American trucker understands the fuel saving properties of modern diesel engines. Diesel fuel requires less crude oil to produce than gasoline and it gets better mileage. Clearly, modern fuel-efficient diesel engines are a major step in the right direction.

But wait, what if we started growing crops such as sunflower seeds and canola and then converted these vegetable oils into biodiesel that could be used in diesel engines. One of the solutions to our petroleum oil crisis is right under our noses. The American farmer may be one of the solutions to our energy crisis. Canola and sunflower seeds can very easily be cold pressed right on the farm. This raw oil can be easily strained and put directly into a biodiesel processor that produces a very high grade of biodiesel. The biodiesel can run all of the diesel farm equipment without any engine modifications. All of this can be done on a small or large scale. A simple seed press can be purchased for around \$3,500. A good biodiesel processor can cost less than \$3,000. There you have it. For a very small investment even a small farmer can start growing his own fuel. It's a grass roots solution that really makes sense. In the long run, the American farmer may be the solution to America's dwindling supply of oil!

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